

AL, BNP wrangling over EC roadmap

STAR REPORT

The ruling Awami League has said it would not accept any act of the Election Commission if that goes beyond the constitution.

The BNP, however, alleged the government and the commission were speaking in the same voice.

The EC on July 16 announced a roadmap for the 11th national elections. The ruling party welcomed the move terming it implementable, but BNP alleged the roadmap was a "blue-print" to bring AL back to power again.

At a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, the Minister for Local Government, Nurul Huda, said that the government would assist the EC to hold the polls in a completely fair manner.

"And all the political parties will have to be given their rights and be allowed to carry out their political activities before the elections," he added.

He alleged the ruling party was conspiring to hold "another" stage-managed election and said the AL "never paid heed to good words".

His only goal is to cling to state power, he means. That is why it is hatching a conspiracy to hold a stage-managed election again," he added.

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Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue, speaks at a session of the "International Conference on Development Options for Dhaka Towards 2035" yesterday in the capital's Sonargaon hotel.

Undocumented

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At the meeting, DG Immigration Mustafizur Al confirmed that all the illegal Bangladeshis living in Malaysia will get a special permit to legalise under the 're-hiring programme' which will continue till December 31, 2017, according to a press release of Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur issued on Tuesday.

The Malaysian government has also asked all the undocumented Bangladeshis there to take the opportunity and legalise their status under the programme.

About the crackdown, the high commission press release said the drive is part of a usual and continuous action undertaken by countries against irregular workers to maintain the law and order of that country.

The immigration authority also assured to facilitate free movement of all the illegal Bangladeshi workers to visit the Immigration office to register themselves in the 're-hiring programme' without any fear of arrest or crackdown. But the workers have to obtain letters from their employers first.

It is an undoubtedly a positive decision to legalise the Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia," said a Bangladeshi diplomat.

According to sources in Malaysia, employers were given the opportunity to legalise the employment status of their illegal foreign workers under the Immigration Department's E-kad (enforcement card) programme which started on February 15 this year and ended on June 30.

On July 1, the immigration authorities launched a large-scale operation to

No more unplanned development of city

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Annuul Huq said Dhaka city for years has been bogged down by perennial problems like traffic congestion and waterlogging.

"We're changing the city. Every three months you'll see a change in the city. In next two years we'll bring Dhaka up to a very good livable standard..."

"Possibly, we'll not be able to solve all the problems. We're trying to change the transport system by forming the policy of corporate ownership. If we can do that, a big problem in the transport sector would be solved," he said.

Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon said 56 organisations were working for Dhaka's development and service delivery. There was no public service delivery plan for Dhaka city and not enough funds to provide services.

"A city government's urban policy is a must for resolving Dhaka's urban problems," Khokon said.

Former Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit supported the idea and said "Dhaka needs a constitution of its own or a common authority on city development and management", instead of multiplicity of organisations that lead to clash, confusion, and overlapping.

MAJ GEN ABU SAYEED MD MASUD OF Special Forces Organisation of the Army said Dhaka should be transformed. Hatirjheel project was a role model for the transformation, he said.

Coordination among stakeholders, chalking out a master plan and restoring the four rivers surrounding the capital, among others, could transform Dhaka.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office Kamal Abdur Naser Chowdhury said coordination among various agencies could always be ensured through the Prime Minister's Office.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, said the discourse would involve services to the upcoming new Dhaka city.

Zhu Ruolin, former dean of Pudong Planning and Design Institute, China and Abdur Rahman, chairman of Rajuk, also spoke on the occasion.

 SHEILA DIKSHIT FORMER DELHI CHIEF MINISTER	 SAYEED KHOKON DHAKA SOUTH CITY CORPORATION MAYOR	 ANNUUL HUQ DHAKA NORTH CITY CORPORATION MAYOR	 QIMIAO FAN WORLD BANK COUNTRY DIRECTOR
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"The World Bank is fully committed to this endeavour. We support the investments that are needed to transform Dhaka."

"Now the World Bank is talking about a planned Dhaka towards 2035 but I have not seen them advocating for a planned Dhaka city in the last 15 years," the mayor added.

LGRD Minister Khander Mosharrar Hossain said Dhaka constitutes one percent of the country's landmass but contributes 36 percent to the GDP with 10 percent of the total population.

The government is working with a vision to make Dhaka the capital of a middle-income country by 2021 and capital of a developed country by 2041, he said.

Dhaka South City Corporation

When money can buy

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China, where importers or body doubles stand trial and receive punishment for a monetary reward.

Following the petition, the HC on April 4, 2015, granted six months' bail to Arif and ordered the OC of Singair Police Station to investigate the matter.

Cited in the case documents, Kibria told The Daily Star that Aynal, now 40, had an extramarital affair with a woman, whose husband was then abroad.

The woman filed the case against Aynal after becoming pregnant.

Kibria added that Aynal remained absconding ever since the case was filed.

The woman went on to give birth to a child.

Later on, she married another man, Kibria added, that she was now abroad with her husband.

To ensure a clean break for Aynal, his relatives offered Arif, a local of the area, Tk 2 lakh to be used for going to Malaysia to change his fortune, Kibria said.

Aynal soon returned to the country from Malaysia on June 5, 2015, and surrendered to the trial court the same day.

Ctg, Benapole ports to stay open 24/7

FROM PAGE 1

of Revenue (NBR), Bangladesh Bank, Bangladesh Land Port Authority and Chittagong sea port Corporation are on the meeting chaired by Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan.

The meeting decided that the foreign ministry would write to the Indian counterpart so that Petrapole land port in West Bengal is also kept open round-the-clock. Petrapole is on the Indian side of Petrapole-Benapole border.

Apart from the customs office, the immigration department, banks and offices of Border Guard Bangladesh also stay open 24 hours every day, the meeting decided.

BENAPOLE LAND PORT

At present, the customs house at the Benapole port has only half of the manpower it requires for functioning smoothly and it is hampering the export and import activities there.

As many as 173 of the 341 posts at the customs office and 20 of the 120 posts at the port office of Benapole are vacant, reports our Benapole correspondent, citing officials concerned.

Several top officials at the customs office said although Benapole was announced commissionate in November, 2001, it never had sufficient manpower.

"On several occasions, we talked to NBR in this regard but to no avail," said an official, wishing not to be named.

Some 500 trucks carrying import goods, worth around Tk 20 crore, and 250 trucks with export goods, worth around Tk 10 crore, go through the port every day, said officials.

Currently, the customs office remains open from 9:00am to 5:00pm. However, loading and offloading of goods at the port may continue till midnight.

Mofizur Rahman, president of C&F Agent Association, loading and offloading of goods were often delayed due to a lack of manpower, which causes troubles for importers.

"The workload is huge. One official has to do the work of two to three officials," he said.

Shawkat Hossain, commissioner at the Benapole customs house, also said regular activities at the port were being hampered due to the crisis. He said extra manpower has been hired for a round-the-clock operation there.

Razul Islam, deputy director at the port, said they would need twice or even three times the number of their current staff in this regard.

CHITTAGONG SEA PORT

The Chittagong port has been witnessing a congestion of vessels at its outer anchorage for the last two months.

Talking to The Daily Star, port officials said the main reason behind the situation is lack of jetties and equipment needed for dealing with increasing number of bulk cargoes and containers.

There is no alternative to constructing new jetties and terminals at the ports but it will need time, they said.

Zafar Alam, member (member and planning) at the Chittagong Port Authority, said the port always remained open except three days during the two Tides.

The other stakeholders, including importers and exporters, have to be active 24 hours. We are always ready to deliver goods whenever the clearing and forward agents come," he said.

Previously, value assessment of export cargoes was carried out seven days a week at the Chittagong customs house. Since July 6, the same has been done with the import cargoes, said officials, adding that on average, two lakh metric tonnes of goods are imported and exported through this sea port every day.

AFM Abdullah Khan, commissioner at the customs house, said the cleaning and forwarding agents needed to stay active all the time.

FBCI WELCOMES GOVT DECISION

Shafiqul Islam Mohiuddin, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, has welcomed the government decision to keep the ports open 24/7.

However, with the current capacity, be it manpower, equipment or the infrastructure, it might be difficult to deliver services to the importers and exporters at a quick pace, he said.

The 24-hour operation was not enough. All the logistic supports, including off-docks, banks, C&F agents, loading and offloading staff, also need to be ready for ensuring a round-the-clock operation at the ports.

He said the government needed more manpower and heavy equipment at the Chittagong port.

For example, he said, there were only four gantries, meant for carrying goods from offshore to ensure for transportation, at the port.

"We need at least 10 such gantries at this moment as our work has increased manifold over the years," he said.

Sometimes, it takes 10 to 12 days to offload goods from the port, which create problems for everybody, including the foreign trade partners, he said.